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***Bureau of Tobacco Education and Prevention***

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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***Tobacco-Free Youth Theme for 2008 World No Tobacco Day***  
**World No Tobacco Day to be observed on Saturday, May 31, 2008**

“The Arizona Department of Health Services supports the World Health Organization’s efforts to draw attention to dangerous and deceitful tobacco products,” said ADHS BTEP Bureau Chief Wayne Tormala. “About one third of middle school students (31%) and over half of high school students (57%) reported trying some form of tobacco in their lifetime.

This year, the World No Tobacco Day theme is *Tobacco-Free Youth*. This year's theme highlights two critical messages: (1) tobacco marketing can contribute to disability and death, and (2) complete ban on advertising, sponsorship and promotion are highly effective measures for tobacco control as they reduce experimentation and initiation in tobacco use

Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the world. As the tobacco industry intensifies its efforts to hook new, young and potentially life-long tobacco users, the health of a significant percentage of the world's youth is seriously threatened by their deadly products. Nicotine is a highly addictive substance and child and adolescent experimentation can easily lead to a lifetime of tobacco dependence.

Globally, most people start smoking before the age of 18, and almost a quarter of individuals begin using tobacco before the age of 10. The younger children are when they first try smoking, the more likely they are to become regular tobacco users and the less likely they are to quit.

Tormala said ADHS BTEP is working now to launch a new tobacco prevention program in Sept. 2008 to coincide with “back to school”. The marketing and media effort will be largely internet and technology driven to reach 12-17 year old Arizonans. “We are developing a campaign to reach kids where they are consuming media messages – online. And, we are going to be focusing on the dangers of tobacco use including its being highly addictive.”

“World No Tobacco Day offers the perfect opportunity for us to talk about preventing youth from starting and also to let tobacco users know about the help that is available if they want to quit,” Tormala said.

For information about quitting and cessation counseling services throughout Arizona, visit [www.ASHline.org](http://www.ASHline.org) or call 1-800-55-66-222.

*Source: Arizona Youth Tobacco Survey 2005 Report, Revised Version, August 2007*